

SALTONSTALL PARK



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BY

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PREFACE.

WHILE searching the Colonial Records for Suffield's early history, the writer found allusions to "Saltonstall Brook" and "Saltonstall Park," whose history was buried in the rubbish of centuries. Sir Richard Saltonstall, from whom they derived their name, was the son of the Lord Mayor of London, a patentee and founder of the Massachusetts and Connecticut Colonies, returned to England, had great influence at Court, was ambassador to Holland, and a judge of the High Court of Justice of England. The demand for his valuable services in England prevented his return to America, as he undoubtedly intended. (Bond's History of Watertown, p. 915.)

In reply to the request of the author of the "History of Windsor," this sketch embodies what the writer has gathered relating to the almost forgotten "Saltonstall Park."

SALTONSTALL PARK.

BY H. S. SHELDON.

Sir Richard Saltonstall, Knight, was one of the patentees and founders of the Massachusetts Colony. He came to New England in 1630, aided in establishing its Colonial Government, and returned to England in 1631, where he died in 1658. (Bond's Hist. of Watertown, p. 905.) He was also a patentee under the first Connecticut Patent in 1631, and was active in promoting its settlement. It seems probable that he visited the Connecticut River before his return to England.

By virtue of patents and by prepossession he claimed land about the Connecticut River, and attempted to establish himself on the river in 1635, before the Dorchester men began the settlement of Windsor. He fitted out a pinnace from England (Capt. White, master) with ample material, and sent Francis Stiles (carpenter) with twenty men to the Connecticut River "to prepare a house against my coming, and enclose grounds for my cattle."

The commission of Capt. White, the master of the vessel (ordered him) "to be on one side of the river, and Mr. Stiles on the other side," indicate an intention to take land on (either or) both sides, between the Plymouth trading-house and the falls. They reached the Connecticut River about the first of July, 1635, but for some reason "went not forward on the business of taking up land."

"When at last they had got a man to go and measure it out there was no ground neither for meadow, nor arable or pasture grounds."

"The Dorchester men had taken up the best place before, and the Plymouth men had sent a letter discharging the men for meddling with it." (B. Green's letter.) So the attempt to take land west of the river for Sir Richard proved a failure.

Francis Stiles did, however, at or about this time take up about 2,000 acres along the Connecticut River Falls, for a park for Sir Richard Saltonstall. This order seems to have been included in his commission when he was sent over from England. — (*Stiles and Hayden's Affidavit.*)

The park was within Massachusetts jurisdiction until 1713, and the recorded Saltonstall title was originally derived from the Massachusetts General Court.

His interesting letter, containing a chapter of the earliest history of the Connecticut River, is here inserted:

"GOOD MR. WINTHROP:

Being credibly informed (as by the enclosed* may appear), y't there hath beene some abuse and injury done me, by Mr. Ludlow and others of Dorchester, who would

* Bartholomew Greene's letter and Francis Stiles's relation.

not suffer Francis Styles and his men to Impayle grounds wheare I appoynted them at Connecticute, Although both by patent which I tooke above 4 years since & prepossession. Dorchester men being then unsettled and seekening up the river above the falls for a place to plant upon but finding none better to their liking they speedily came backe againe & discharged my workmen casting lots upon y^e place where he was purposed to begine his worke notwithstanding he often told them what greate charge I had bene at In sending him & soe many men to prepare a house against my coming & Inclose grounds for my cattle & how the damage would fall heavy upon those that thus hindered me, whom Francis Styles conceived to have best right to make choice of any place there. Notwithstanding they resisted him slighting me with many unbeseeing words such as he was unwilling to relate to me, but justifie upon his oath before Authority when he is called to it. Therefore we having appoynted you to be our gouverneur there, the rest of the Company being sensible of this affront to me would have signified their minds in a generall letter unto you. I told them sith it did concerne myself In particular, & might perhaps breed some jealousies In y^e people & soe distaste them with our Government, whereupon they Advised me to write unto you to request you with all speed and dilligence to examine this matter, & if (for the substance) you find it as to us it appears by this Information herewith sent you, y^e then In a faire and gentle way you give notice to Dorchester men of this great wronge they have done me. Being the first y^e to further this designe sent my pinnace thither at my own great charge of almost 1000£ which now is cast away by their detaining soe longe before she coulede unlade & for which In Justice I may require Satisfaction, as alsoe for my provision which cost above five hundred pounds & are now (I heare) almost al spent by this means & not any payling as yet set up at that place where I appoynted them, which had I but Imagined they would have thus greedily snached up all the best grounds upon y^e river, my pinnace should rather have sought a pylate at new Plymouth then to have staid ten days as she did in the Bay & to have given them such warning thus to prevent me. And let them spaire (as I am told) they may very well forth of y^e great quantity they have Ingroced to themselves soe much as my proportion comes to & if they have built any houses thereupon I will pay them their resonable charges for the same. But I pray you either go yourself with some skilful men with you or send Sergeant Gardiner & some with him to set out my grounds where it may be most convenient betweene Plymouth Trucking house & y^e falls according to my direction given both to the M^r of my pinnacle & to Francis Styles, which I think they will not now deny me understanding what charge I am at (with others of the company) to secure this River's mouth for the defence of them all wherein we hope you will neglect no meanes according to our great trust reposed in you, thus beseeching the lord to prosper the worke begun, I commend you with all our affayers under your charge to the gracious direction and protection of our good god In whom I am

"Your most assured friend

"RIC. SALTONSTALL.

"For my worthily Respected Friend

"Mr. John Winthrop Gouverneur of the Plantations upon Connectacut Ryver in Newe England.

"(Labeled) Sir Richard Saltonstall — 1636."

— (*Mass. Hist. So'cy Coll., 1st Series, Vol. VIII, p. 42.*)

Letter from Bartholomew Greene to Sir Richard Saltonstall:

"To the Right Worshipful and his most lovinge Mr. Sur Richard Saltonstall, Knight, at his house in Whit Streete, London.

"Right Worshipful, — my humbill serv[ic]es is remembred Havinge soe fitt a mesenger I canot but right a word or tow. This is to certifie your worshipp this mesenger was at Canaticoatt and can tell you how the case stands. For my parte, it is greefe to me but the truthe is I canot, we could not do no mor in it. I did vse the best consell, and vse wat meayns I could in the busnes for yo^r good, but M^r Whitt(e) comision was to be one side of the river, M^r Stilles on the other, and after I had vse

meyns, when M^r Whitt and M^r Stills went, and could not get a man to goe by no meayns; and as soone as I hurd the(y) went not forward in the bus(i)nes, I put myself vpon it agayne and at last got a man to go to measur it out at a dear ratte, and when he came ther ther was not ground, neather for medow or ariball or pastur gronds, that would giue yo^r worshipp content, that the men darst not lay it out; the shuld a done yo^r worshipp (w)ronge in the same, seing that Dorchester men had taken vp the best place befor, and Plimmorth men sente a letter to discarg o^r men for medellinge with it, sayinge it was ther right; for I conseaue that M^r Ludloe was the cheffe man that hinderd it. He was the onli man of Dorchester that sett dowrie ther. I hope that this barer, M^r Woodcock(s) man, (Jo Davis on margin) will certifie you how it is. I haue riten manie letters for this purpose.

"Other things I haue bine larger in letters. I am loath to be tow trobellsome to yo^r worshipp in the like expresseures. M^r Hooker hath expresse somethinge that waye. The Lord direct you and advise you for the best, and further yo^r ofrings for his glorie and yo^r good and all ours. Thus w^h my serues agayne, I com' you to the only wise God, and rest yo^r poo^r servant to the vtter most of my power to command. From Watertown this 30 of December, 1635.

"BARTH. GREENE." *

—(*Mass. Hist. Coll., Fifth Series, I, pp. 216, 217.*)

Sir Richard's son, Robert, came over soon after his father's return to England, acting as agent for his father's large land grants here. One of these was a grant of five hundred acres by the Massachusetts General Court in 1641, "to be set out by Mr. Pynchon and Mr. Smyth below Springfield, if it fall within our Patent." — (*Mass. Col. Rec., Vol. I, p. 381.*)

This grant to Sir Richard was also recognized as valid by the Connecticut General Court in 1642. — (*Conn. Col. Rec., Vol. I, p. 72.*)

In May, 1646, "Robert Saltonstall hath on his petition 2100 acres of land allowed him, about the Connecticut Falls as a part of that before granted to Sir Richard, but no place assigned." — (*Mass. Col. Rec., Vol. III, p. 66.*) Robert Saltonstall deeded this grant to his brother Richard, and died unmarried in 1650. — (*Essex Deeds, Vol. I, p. 7.*)

The five hundred acre grant to Sir Richard, given by him to his son Robert, appears to have been covered by the later grant of twenty-one hundred acres in the same locality which, according to Essex Deeds, I, p. 7, was conveyed by Robert to his brother Richard, in 1646, for the sum of one hundred pounds.

Its history is given by Francis Styles in Styles and Hayden's affidavit, who testified as follows :

"That they very well knew and was intimately acquainted with Mr. Francis Stiles formerly of said Windsor, and that they have often heard the said Francis Stiles declare and say, that he was sent over from England into New England by Sir Richard Saltonstall, Knight, to take up a tract of land for him, of about two thousand acres, upon Connecticut River, and to fence it in for a Park; and that accordingly he, said Francis Stiles, had taken up that quantity of land for the said Saltonstall on the East side of the said river, at and near the place called Warehouse Point, at the foot of the falls between Windsor and Enfield; and that the same Park was one mile in breadth from North to South at the said river and did run East with that breadth from the river until it included the quantity of two thousand acres, and that the said river was

* Bartholomew Greene settled at Cambridge, Mass., 1632, was made Freeman, 1634, and died about 1638, when making preparations to remove to Connecticut. He was the ancestor of the line of the earliest printers of New England. His grandson Bartholomew printed the first newspaper issued on this continent (Thomas Hist. of Printing) (the Boston News-Letter), April 24, 1704.

the West bounds thereof; also, that a certain brook running upon the said tract of land, commonly called Saltonstall's Brook, and the said place called Warehouse Point, are both comprehended and contained within the said Park and that he, said Francis Styles, had purchased the said tract of land for a Park of one Ne-row-we-nock an Indian Sachem."*—(*Conn. Col. Rec., Vol. XV, p. 580.*)

The north bound of ancient Windsor, as established by the Connecticut General Court in 1636, and further defined in 1642, was the mouth of Kettle brook, and so east over the great river "running (bounded) upon Mr. Saltonstall's land (the Park) neere the falls."—(*Conn. Col. Rec., Vol. I, pp. 7, 8, 72.*)

The brook at the lower end of Longmeadow was the original south bound of Springfield. Below this and along the east side of the Connecticut River lay the land then known as "Freshwater" and "Saltonstall Park" (now Enfield and Warehouse Point). In 1647, the Massachusetts General Court granted to Springfield jurisdiction over this tract down to the Windsor line, as follows: "It is ordered by this Co'te, that all the land on the east side of Conetecot Ryver from the towne of Springfeild downe to the warehouse w^{ch} they formerly built there, shall belong to the towne of Springfeild, for the p'sent & during the pleasure of the Co'te, & twenty poles below the warehouse." (*Mass. Col. Rec., Vol. II, p. 227.*) This is the first allusion to the Warehouse I have discovered in any cotemporary records. It fixes the site of the famous building with a degree of accuracy.

It was located at a point near the foot of the falls at the head of river navigation for shallops and barks. It was used for the storage of goods while in transit by cattle or boats up and down the river. How long it was in use is not known, but probably until boats were built suitable for running the river rapids.

When William Pynchon began the permanent settlement of Springfield in 1636, he sent his goods around by water from Boston in Gov. Winthrop's bark, "The Blessing of the Bay."—(*Winthrop's Journal.*) It is probable the goods were landed at the foot of the falls near where the Warehouse was built by Springfield soon afterward.

Francis Styles' testimony, and the grants by the Massachusetts General Court establish the fact that this was the place where Sir Richard Saltonstall, Knight, had ordered the inclosure of grounds for a park, and for beginning a settlement.

Massachusetts claimed jurisdiction along the east side of the Connecticut River to the foot of the falls (or the north bound of ancient Windsor previously described) under the erroneous survey of the Colony line by Woodward and Saffery in 1642.

This was a dense wilderness, and its jurisdiction was of little importance before Suffield's settlement in 1670, and that of Enfield a few years later. Opening these towns to settlement opened the question of sovereignty, and forty years of contention between the border towns followed.

In 1671, Connecticut enacted as follows: "This Court grants that the bounds of Windsor shall extend to the northward two miles beyond their old Grant" (of 1636).—(*Conn. Col. Rec., Vol. II, p. 155.*)

This strip of land was valuable for its timber, and the tar and turpentine yielded, and it became the scene of bitter contention and strife.

In 1710, Connecticut appointed a committee "to survey and run the

* By Colonial Law an Indian deed conferred no title to land.

northern line or boundary of the town of Windsor, according to the true intent and meaning of a former grant" (1671). — (*Idem*, Vol. V, pp. 118-147.)

The committee reported as follows: "Beginning at the mouth of Kettle Brook (commonly called Stony-Brook, in Suffield) where it empties itself into Connecticut River against an Island in the River, the said line runs West (by the needle) five miles into the wilderness, and East (from the East side of said Connecticut River) eight miles into the wilderness, and caused ditches to be made all the length of the said line throughout, at the distance of every eighty rods, according as the law requires." . . . "Provided always, that this settlement of the said line or boundary, shall not be construed to the prejudice or hurt of any of the heirs of Sir Richard Saltonstall deceased, or their claim and right to a tract of land near the Ware-house Point, commonly called Saltonstall's Park." — (*Idem*, Vol. V, p. 147.)

This extension, if permitted, would have encroached upon the established township of Suffield, about one mile, and about two miles on Enfield.

By the adjustment of Colony and town lines in 1713, Windsor secured about one-half the desired extension, which east of the river just embraced the Saltonstall Park.

The north boundary line of Windsor, as then established, remained as the Colony line until 1749. It is now the north boundary line of East Windsor and Windsor Locks, and the south boundary line of Suffield and Enfield.

The Colony line (of 1713), as then assented to, was unsatisfactory to Connecticut, because it did not accord with its charter. This unsettled boundary question harassed the people of the border towns (Suffield, Enfield, and Woodstock) for more than a century. They seceded from Massachusetts, and were received into Connecticut in 1749. Massachusetts did not relinquish its claim to these towns until long after it had ceased to be a Colony and had become a State.

The State line west of the Connecticut River was permanently settled in 1803, and east of the river in 1826. — (*Private Laws of Conn.*, Vol. II, pp. 1540-44.)

Gurdon Saltonstall, Governor of Connecticut from 1707 to the time of his death in 1724, was born in Haverhill, Mass., in 1666. He was the son of Nathaniel Saltonstall, grandson of Richard, who bought the park of Robert, and great grandson of Sir Richard Saltonstall, Knight, who was a son of the Lord Mayor of London, and bore the same name and title. All attained great distinction. — (*Elliott's Biographical Dictionary*.)

Richard Saltonstall, son of Sir Richard, came over with his father in 1630, being then twenty years old. He was admitted freeman in Massachusetts 1631, was in Ipswich, 1635, chosen Assistant, 1637, and for many years thereafter. He returned to England, 1683, and there died in 1694. — (*Watertown Genealogies*. *Felt's Hist. of Ipswich*, pp. 77, 78.)

Gov. Saltonstall had been serviceable in procuring the good settlement of the dividing line between the Colonies in 1713, in consideration of which the Connecticut Assembly granted him two thousand acres of land "to be taken up in the equivalent lands at such place as this Assembly hereafter shall assign." — (*Conn. Col. Rec.*, Vol. V, p. 409.)

In 1714, the Assembly enacted as follows: "The Governor having shewn to this Assembly that the Government of the Massachusetts Province has allowed 2000 acres equivalent, to this Colony for a grant of land formerly

made by them to his Ancestor Sir Richard Saltonstall, Kt, which hapened to fall within the bounds of Windsor in this Colony, and having declared in this Assembly that he is content the said town of Windsor should enjoy the said Grant, provided he may take up the equivalent instead thereof, where it may best suit him in the lands given for equivalent by the said Government of Massachusetts."—(*Idem*, Vol. V, p. 437.)

He appears to have chosen a location (which was ratified by the Assembly) "in the North-East corner of this Colony eastward of Woodstock, North of the old supposed line between the Massachusetts and this Colony."—(*Idem*, Vol. V, p. 444.)

However Gov. Saltonstall gained his title, by inheritance or by purchase, both Colonies acknowledged its validity.

Windsor now had undisputed possession and "enjoyment" of the "Park." How, and to whom it was allotted, and when it was first permanently occupied by settlers are questions to be answered by the (East) Windsor Historian.

There was no alluvial land, open-field, or meadow, inviting the Plymouth or Dorchester men to settle here. Its isolated situation and the unsettled question of its jurisdiction and ownership, were among the causes preventing an early settlement.

The charmingly situated village of Warehouse Point now nestles around the site of the ancient Warehouse. Its inhabitants may not be aware that they are dwelling on historic ground, upon the identical spot selected for a Park by one of the first Lords and Gentlemen of England, and a Patentee of both the Massachusetts and Connecticut Colonies, and subsequently owned by his descendant, Gov. Saltonstall of Connecticut.

The Connecticut River Rapids and the Saltonstall Brook glide swiftly through their rocky channels on their way to the sea, as they did more than two hundred and fifty years ago, when the Saltonstalls gazed admiringly upon them, with a desire to possess the land that offered such admirable attractions for a Gentleman's Park, nowhere equaled in Old England.

FINIS.

